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Brief Chronicle of the last Month.

NOVELLO'S SACRED COMPOSITIONS.—There is no one now living who has done so much for the advancement of sacred music in England as Vincent Novello. Possessed of original genius, cultivated by deep study of every branch of his art, conversant with its greatest productions in every age and country, enlarged in his views of its principles, and skilful in the details of its practice, he has laboured in his vocation of an artist with a singleness of purpose rarely to be met with. If he has not, by stooping to vulgar tastes, obtained an ephemeral popularity, he has achieved a high and permanent reputation; and his name will live in the annals of the art as one of the greatest benefactors to English music in the nineteenth century. His claims to gratitude are founded not only on his own contributions to our ecclesiastical music, but on what he has done to render the works of the greatest masters accessible to the public. It is sufficient to allude to his editions of the sacred music of Purcell (one of the greatest publications that has ever issued from the English press), and of the masses of Haydn and Mozart;—to the noble collection of pieces by the old Italian ecclesiastical composers, selected from the music bequeathed by Lord Fitzwilliam to the University of Cambridge, and known by the name of the "Fitzwilliam Music;" to the newly-completed edition of "Boyce's Cathedral Music;" and other publications of great magnitude and value, demanding an expenditure of time, money, and ability, for which any hope of adequate recompense (commercially speaking) was out of the question; for though they are in the hands of almost everybody competent to use them, yet the number of such persons (increasing as it is) is as yet by no means great in this country. His labours, too, have been of infinite benefit in preparing, by skilful arrangement and adaptation, many great foreign compositions for the use of the English public. As an English composer Mr. Novello holds a high rank, both in sacred and secular music; though it is to the former that we must at present confine our attention. He has adopted what we hold to be the true principle in all music—that it must be composed in accordance with the present state of the art, and not trammelled by adherence to antiquated models. Sacred music, it is true, is viewed, sometimes even by sound and learned musicians, in a peculiar light. It must, they say, be orthodox; and, to be orthodox, it must follow a code of old laws founded on the practice of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It is one of Mr. Novello's merits as a composer of sacred music, that he writes like a musician of the nineteenth, not of the sixteenth century. His music is learned in its construction, rich in the resources of counterpoint, and always grave and devout; but it bears no studied air of antiquity, and its phraseology is that of the age to which it belongs. These qualities we have observed in all his music which has come under our notice, and we have been particularly struck with them in his more recent compositions. Among these we may mention, "Glory be to God," the hymn of praise in the Communion Service, in four vocal parts, opening with a chorus in E major, passing into a quartett of solo voices in the relative minor, and closing with a chorus in the original key. It is written throughout in plain counterpoint, of note against note; and the harmony is rendered smooth and grateful by the melodious flow of all the parts. In the quartett, the phrase, "Have mercy upon us!" is full of expression. "Therefore with angels," a short choral anthem in E flat, is, like the former, in plain counterpoint, easy of execution, and remarkable for grand simplicity of effect. The "Nunc Dimittis" in C, from the Evening Service, is a most masterly composition, which shows the application of fugued counterpoint to its most legitimate purpose,—not that of wire-drawing a theme according to fixed scholastic forms, but of giving variety and interest to the harmony by suggesting points of imitation and response among the

different parts. The first, as well as the last, movement of this "Nunc Dimittis," shows how the resources of fugue writing may be employed without stiffness and formality. There are several other recent works of Mr. Novello, of which, in our narrow space, we can only mention the titles. They are, "Hear me, O Lord," a motett for a treble voice and chorus; hymn, "O thou that read'st the secret heart," the poetry by Mrs. Opie; and the famous Christmas hymn, "Adeste Fideles," harmonized for four voices, with an organ or pianoforte accompaniment, and an English version to the original Latin words. Of these works it is sufficient to say, that our readers will find all of them marked with the characters which we have ascribed to Mr. Novello's style.—*Abridged from Daily News, Sept. 22.*

THE BIRMINGHAM MUSICAL FESTIVAL.—The success of this Festival, financially considered, was very great, the gross amount of receipts being near £1200, of which a large portion will remain for the benefit of the Charity after all the expences are paid. It was also remarkable for the production of Mendelssohn's new work, *Elijah*; but even this work, with the advantage of the author's presence as conductor, was but imperfectly given, from the want of proper rehearsals. Many other works, the names of which in the scheme attracted visitors from a long distance, were so wretchedly mutilated, as to cause the greatest disappointment—Beethoven's Grand Mass in D, for instance. It is a subject worthy the serious consideration of future Committees, whether they will not do well to give some better guarantee of performing the music promised in the programme, by increasing the number of rehearsals, so that the present desire to be amongst the audience at this Festival may be continued, and the future receipts be kept up to a similar amount with those of the Festival just over.

HEREFORD FESTIVAL.—The 123rd meeting of the three choirs of Worcester, Gloucester, and Hereford, was held at the latter city, and appears to have been successful; the receipts being rather over £800. The music was carefully rehearsed and well performed by a judiciously-selected band. It has been the subject of remark from some of our correspondents, that it would have been more in conformity with the title of the meeting had more of the singers of Worcester and Gloucester been included in the engagements. This is a matter for the future consideration of the conductor, Mr. Townshend Smith, who appears to have otherwise fulfilled the many and arduous duties of his office in a highly satisfactory manner.

THE BRISTOL PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY performed Spohr's Oratorio, *The Fall of Babylon*, on the 21st September, to a crowded audience in the large Concert Hall at the Victoria Rooms. The performance was most excellent, and the chorus singers especially showed a very decided progress since the commencement of the Society some three or four years ago. There is a feature in this Society well worthy of imitation. The Committee not only secure good solo singers (the present engagements including Miss Sabilla Novello, Miss Bassano, Mr. Millar, Mr. Weiss, and Mr. Henry Phillips), but they pay much attention to the excellence of their band; and, in addition to several good local and neighbouring players, several of the orchestra were from London. The audience seemed much to enjoy the music, and were so little tired as to encore the last song in the Oratorio, sung by Miss Sabilla Novello; a similar compliment was also paid to Miss Bassano and Mr. H. Phillips.